

Monroe Law Office, Limestone
Private Rd., 1 mi. S of US Rte. 250
Keswick
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS VA-988

HABS,

VA.

2-KESW,

1A-

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

REDUCED DRAWINGS

Addendum to
Monroe Law Office, Limestone Plantation
Keswick
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-988

HABS
VA,
2-KESW,
1A-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HABS
VA,
2-KESW,
1A-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Monroe Law Office, Limestone Plantation
South of Virginia Route 250
Keswick
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-988

LOCATION: Seven miles east on Virginia State Highway 250 from Charlottesville city line to Keswick, Virginia. One mile south from Virginia State Highway 250 on private drive at "Limestone Farm" sign.

PRESENT OWNERSHIP: Donald D. and Eleanor Florence
Keswick
Virginia

DATE: The most likely date of erection is 1794, based on a carpenter's mark and date carved into a basement ceiling beam. Written documentation locates the building as early as 1800 (Virginia Mutual Assurance Number 388), although the earlier date is probably reliable.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Summary Description - The Limestone Plantation complex at Newwick, Virginia derives its name from the Limestone Creek, first called Plum Tree Branch then Scale's Creek, which washes the only vein of Limestone in the county of Albemarle.¹ Subsequent owners of portions of the tract have included James Monroe, his brother Andrew, Thomas Jefferson, and Dr. George C. Blaetterman. In the 1760's, Thomas Jefferson purchased four acres of the Limestone tract where the Limestone Creek intersected the Three Notched Road on the north. It was here that Jefferson mined and burned the lime for the mortar that was employed in the construction of Monticello and subsequent construction of the University of Virginia.

The Monroe Law Office--the oldest structure remaining on the property--bears the date 1794 and is known to have been occupied by both James and Andrew Monroe.

¹John Hammond Moore, Albemarle, Jefferson's County (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1976), p. 13.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION


Chain of Title - Original and subsequent owners: The following is a complete chain of title to the land on which the Monroe Law Office stands. Reference is the office of the Recorder of Deeds, Albemarle County, Virginia.

- 1749 Deed Book 1, page 168
John Crawford
590 acres including Plum Creek Branch, to
south of Three Notched Road and north
of the Rivanna River.
- 1761 Deed Book 3, page 135
John Crawford
to
Nelson Anderson
- 1773 October 5
Deed Book 11, page 163
Nelson Anderson
to
Robert Sharp
800 acres including Plum Creek Branch, to
the south of Three Notched Road and
north of the Rivanna River.
- 1800 September 8
Deed Book 20, pages 185-189
Richard and Thomas Sharp
to
James Monroe
175 acres each to James Monroe including
that property known as "Limestone Plantation"
- 1826 September 20
Deed Book 26, page 147
James Monroe
to
William Dandridge and William Roane
705 acres
- 1827 July 7
Deed Book 27, page 216
William Dandridge, Jr.
to
George C. Blaetterman
705 acres

- 1850 April 2
 Deed Book 45, page 308
 Elizabeth C. Blaetterman
 conveyance to family including
 Anna C. Siegfried
 Properties of the late George C. Blaetterman
 including 738 acres known as Limestone.
- 1862 December 9
 Deed Book 60, page 59
 Anna C. Siegfried
 to
 O. W. Purvis
 738½ acres - Limestone Creek tract
- 1922 April 26
 Deed Book 179, page 292
 O. W. Purvis (died intestate)
 division of properties among
 children and wife
 856 acres to Mrs. George Whitten including
 508 acres of Limestone tract
- 1945 June 8
 Deed Book 263, page 396
 George Whitten
 to
 C. B. Webber et al
 520 acres including Limestone tract
- 1948 August 12
 Deed Book 280, page 81
 C. B. Webber et al
 to
 Donald D. and Eleanor Florence
 508 acres including "B" of Randolph plat
 Limestone Farm

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The property on which the Limestone Plantation complex (including the Monroe Law Office) now stands is part of an original Crown Grant of 1730 and 1734 to a Lewis and a John Crawford--the Crawford portion of the land separating from the Lewis tract in 1749. The subsequent tract was a 590 acre plat "including Plum Creek Branch, to south of the Three Notched Road and north of the Rivanna River."² No documentary evidence exists regarding improvements by Crawford or the tract's subsequent owner Nelson Anderson, who bought the property in 1761.³

In October of 1773, the property was transferred from Anderson to Robert Sharp and it seems that the Anderson tract grew in size as Sharp purchased "800 acres, including Plum Creek Branch, to the south of Three Notched Road and north of the Rivanna River."⁴ Construction of the Monroe Law Office by Robert Sharp seems certain during this period. A carpenter's mark on a basement beam indicates the date; August 30, 1794 and bears the monograph  "RS" - Robert Sharp.

² Albemarle County Deed Book 1, p. 168.

³ Ibid., Book 3, p. 135.

⁴ Ibid., Book 11, p. 163.

The property transferred again on September 8 of 1800 from Richard and Thomas Sharp--sons of Robert--to James Monroe: "175 acres each, to James Monroe including the property known as Limestone Farm."⁵ This would be the first indication of the property being called "Limestone." Ownership of Limestone never left James Monroe's possession although it was known that his brother Andrew occupied Limestone at various times himself. Edgar Woods' history of Albemarle County in Virginia notes,

The President had an elder brother, Andrew, who, it is believed, in 1781 purchased a farm near Batesville, where he resided for four years. In 1816 he was living on a farm which the President purchased at Limestone below Milton. He died in 1828.⁶

The question of ownership and occupancy by James Monroe is uncertain at this time. Virginia Mutual Assurance No. 388 of August, 1800 asserts that Monroe occupied the Limestone tract himself; "now occupied by myself."⁷ It is certain that James Monroe occupied the dwelling now known as Monroe Hill at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia from 1790-1799.⁸ It then seems possible that Monroe

⁵Ibid., Book 20, pp. 185-189.

⁶Rev. Edgar Woods, Albemarle County in Virginia (Bridgewater, Virginia: The Green Bookman, 1932), p. 281.

⁷Virginia Mutual Assurance Policy No. 388.

⁸William B. O'Neal, Pictorial History of the University of Virginia (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1968), p. 51.

could have been living at Limestone in 1800. Further, Virginia Mutual Assurance No. 386, also of August 1800, ascribes occupancy of Ash Lawn (another Monroe holding in Albemarle County); "now occupied by my overseer."⁹ Traditionally, history places Monroe at Ash Lawn in 1800. However, by 1809 Virginia Mutual Assurance No. 1238 verifies that Monroe is now living at Ash Lawn; "now occupied by myself,"¹⁰ and it is assumed that the Limestone holding is now occupied by Andrew though still owned by James.

The plat at the bottom of Virginia Mutual Assurance No. 388 is of further interest, showing the existence of three structures at Limestone. Building "C," labeled as "Kitchen" and valued at three hundred and fifty dollars, corresponds in dimensions with the original Sharp Building/Monroe Law Office. The building dimensions of "A" and "B" roughly correspond with the present-day flanking wooden structures of the Main House giving them a probable construction date of pre-1800 also.

Local tradition ascribes that James Monroe used the upper floors of the Sharp structure as an office for his law practice in the first decade of the 1800's and that that name

⁹Virginia Mutual Assurance Policy No. 386.

¹⁰Ibid., Policy No. 1238.

has come down to the present.

In September of 1826 James Monroe sold the Limestone land which had increased to 705 acres to William Dandridge and William Roane¹¹ who in turn sold the 705 acres to Dr. George C. Blaetterman on July 7, 1827.¹² Surveyor's plat dated April 17, 1827 prior to sale.

George Blaetterman was a member of Thomas Jefferson's first faculty at the newly formed University of Virginia. Blaetterman was recommended to Jefferson in 1821 by George Parker and examined for his qualifications by Richard Rush, the American minister to London. Blaetterman served as Professor of Modern Languages in French, Spanish, Italian, German, and Anglo Saxon. Rush's approval of Blaetterman's knowledge was correct, but that of his "character was wrong, for Blaetterman was asked to resign his chair after beating his wife publicly. He taught for two more years, however, until 1840 when he went to Limestone, his nearby farm where he was later found dead in the snow of a fit of apoplexy."¹³

It was under Dr. Blaetterman's ownership that the main building took its present form, probably filling in between

¹¹ Albemarle County Deed Book 26, p. 147.

¹² Ibid., Book 27, p. 216.

¹³ O'Neal, Pictorial History of the University of Virginia, p. 44.

buildings "A" and "B" of Assurance 388 thus relegating the Monroe Law Office to outbuilding status.

In 1850, Elizabeth C. Blaetterman, wife of George C., divided the Blaetterman properties among the children; the land on which the structures now stand transferring to Anna C. Siegfried; "daughter."¹⁴ The holdings passed through the family in the nineteenth century from Anna C. Siegfried to O. W. Purvis in 1862.¹⁵

The Limestone property then passed to Mrs. George Whitten after O. W. Purvis died intestate in 1922.¹⁶ From George Whitten the property changed hands in 1945 to C. B. Webber¹⁷ and again in 1948 to the present owners; Mr. and Mrs. Donald D. Florence.¹⁸

¹⁴ Albemarle County Deed Book 45, p. 308.

¹⁵ Ibid., Book 60, p. 59.

¹⁶ Ibid., Book 179, p. 292.

¹⁷ Ibid., Book 263, p. 396.

¹⁸ Ibid., Book 280, p. 81.

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PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was undertaken by the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia, under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Professor of Architecture. It was developed by De Teel P. Tiller in 1977. The material was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. It was not prepared under HABS supervision, nor edited by members of the HABS staff.